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S E C R E T STATE 249100

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, NATO, BE

SUBJECT: MBFR - BELGIAN NOTE ON COMMON CEILING

REF: STATE 238217 NOTAL

1. MINISTER-COUNSELOR OF BELGIAN EMBASSY, ALFRED CAHEN,
CALLED ON PM/DCA DIRECTOR, VINCE BAKER, ON 11 NOVEMBER TO
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PRESENT A DIPLOMATIC NOTE (TEXT IN PARA 5 BELOW), SETTING
OUT BELGIAN GOVERNMENT REFLECTIONS ON PRESENT STATE OF
MBFR. CAHEN EXPLAINED THAT THE NOTE IS A WRITTEN VERSION
OF HIS PREVIOUS ORAL PRESENTATION TO MESSRS. VEST AND

FLOWERREE (SEE REFTTEL). SIMILAR NOTES ARE TO BE PRESENTED TO THE MORE IMPORTANT ALLIED MBFR PARTICIPANTS AND TO VARIOUS NATO MISSIONS. THE BELGIANS DO NOT INTEND TO TABLE THEIR PROPOSAL IN NATO AT THIS TIME; RATHER, THEY ARE SEEKING BILATERAL REACTIONS.

2. CAHEN SAID THAT THE BASIC BELGIAN ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE TALKS, NOW FOCUSED ON PHASING, ARE AT AN IMPASSE WHICH COULD LEAD TO THE END OF MBFR IF CONTINUED. THE EAST RECENTLY TABLED ITS FIRST STEP PROPOSAL, WHICH IS NOT HELPFUL TO ALLIED GOALS. CONSEQUENTLY, THE BELGIANS RECOMMEND THAT THE ALLIES SHIFT ACCENT TOWARD THE MORE ESSENTIAL ALLIED CONCEPT OF THE COMMON CEILING, THEREBY

PUTTING SOVIETS ON DEFENSIVE AND PRODUCING A NEW EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. ANOTHER MAJOR CONSIDERATION, STATED IN BELGIAN NOTE, IS NEED TO REALIGN DISCUSSIONS IN VIENNA ACCORDING TO ALLIANCE PRIORITIES AND FOCUS NEGOTIATIONS ON OUTCOME OF MBFR BECAUSE OF PRESSURES ON SOME ALLIES FOR EARLIER REDUCTIONS.

3. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE TIME FRAME FOR THIS RECOMMENDED SHIFT, CAHEN RESPONDED, "AS SOON AS POSSIBLE". IN EXPLANATION OF STATEMENT IN NOTE THAT BELGIANS THOUGHT CONCENTRATION ON PHASING WOULD PREJUDICE ALLIED GOALS, HE INDICATED THAT THE TALKS ARE DEADLOCKED BY INTERNAL FACTORS, THAT THE ALLIES COULD NOT WITHDRAW FROM THE TALKS, AND THAT THE EAST HAS GAINED THE TACTICAL UPPER-HAND BY TRYING TO EXTRACT SUBSTANTIVE ADVANTAGES FROM A PROCEDURAL SHIFT. CAHEN ACKNOWLEDGED THE DIFFICULTIES OF AN OVERT ATTACK ON THE COMMON CEILING IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT INDICATED THAT THE BELGIANS BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS DO NOT WANT A BREAK AND WOULD NOT FORCE ONE ON THIS ISSUE. THE ALLIES SHOULD MOVE TO A SUBJECT WHERE THE SOVIETS ARE LESS COMFORTABLE THAN ON PHASING, WHERE THEY WILL HAVE TO ASSUME A DIFFERENT ATTITUDE, AND WHERE THE ALLIES MAY BE ABLE TO FORCE SUBSTANTIVE
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OFFERS.

4. WHEN IT WAS NOTED THAT THE US HAD SUGGESTED TO NATO PROPOSALS ON AIR MANPOWER WHICH WOULD PROBE EASTERN ATTITUDES ON THE COMMON CEILING, CAHEN SAID THAT THE BELGIAN PROPOSAL COULD BE LINKED TO THE US AIR MANPOWER PROPOSALS. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, HE SAID THAT US PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF AIR MANPOWER IN COMMON CEILING WAS ONE POSSIBLE WAY OF SHIFTING INTO DISCUSSION OF COMMON CEILING. THE BELGIANS WERE NOT REJECTING THE PRESENT ALLIED TACK. CAHEN STATED THAT A SHIFT MUST BE AGREED TO IN NATO AND THAT THE ALLIES COULD START WITH US AIR PROPOSALS.

5. BEGIN TEXT (OPENING AND CLOSING FORMALITIES OMITTED)

(1) DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF NEGOTIATIONS, THE THESES OF THE EAST AND THOSE OF THE WEST HAVE CONTINUED TO DIFFER WITHOUT IT BEING POSSIBLE TO FIND A COMMON GROUND.

THESE THESES ARE THE FOLLOWING:

- FOR NATO TO ESTABLISH OR RE-ESTABLISH A BALANCE THROUGH ASYMMETRICAL REDUCTIONS LIMITED TO THE GROUND

FORCES. THE NEGOTIATION SHOULD GO ON IN TWO PHASES.

- FOR THE WARSAW PACT, THE PURPOSE IS TO MAINTAIN ITS ADVANTAGES BY RECOMMENDING LINEAR AND SYMMETRICAL REDUCTIONS COVERING THE WHOLE OF THE FORCES AND WEAPONS.

THE SECOND OBJECTIVE IS PROBABLY TO PROTECT ONESELF AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AGAINST ALL EUROPEAN IMPULSES TO CREATE A MILITARY INTEGRATION.

(2) THE NEGOTIATION HAS BEEN ESSENTIALLY CENTERED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PHASES. THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN MOST RELUCTANT INSPITE OF AN APPEARANCE OF FLEXIBILITY LIMITED TO THE PRESENTATION OF A "FIRST STEP". BUT, THIS APPEARANCE OF FLEXIBILITY MUST BE CONSIDERED AS SECRET

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DANGEROUS INsofar AS IT EMERGES ON LIMITED REDUCTIONS WHICH ARE NOT LINKED TO AN AGREEMENT ON THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMON CEILING.

THE SITUATION CAN BE SUMMED UP AS FOLLOWS: THE PACT OF WARSAW REFUSES:

- THE FINAL OBJECTIVE, ALTHOUGH THIS POINT HAS NOT REALLY BEEN DISCUSSED.

- THE APPROACH BY DISTINCT PHASES AND, AS A WHOLE, THE WESTERN PLAN FOR NEGOTIATIONS.

(3) THIS SITUATION RESULTS IN A FREEZE THAT ONE SHOULD NOT DRAMATIZE BUT WHICH MUST URGE US TO SUBMIT OUR PLAN OF NEGOTIATIONS TO A CRITICAL ANALYSIS.

(A) WHAT IS THE REPERCUSSION OF THE "TIME FACTOR"? THE STARTING HYPOTHESIS WAS BASED ON A CERTAIN AMERICAN HASTE AND ON A EUROPEAN PRUDENCE. THE EUROPEANS THOUGHT THEY HAD THE TIME TO SAVE THEIR REDUCTIONS FOR A SECOND PHASE.

(B) HOW DO THE PRIORITIES LINE UP? WHAT IS THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE COMMON CEILING COMPARED TO THE PHASES? A CERTAIN NUMBER OF FACTS REQUIRE ATTENTION:

(A) THE MBFR ARE HENCEFORTH A COURSE FROM WHICH IT WOULD NOT BE REASONABLE FOR ONE TO CLAIM HE CAN WITHDRAW FROM UNLESS SOME FUNDAMENTAL MODIFICATIONS WOULD OCCUR IN THE EAST/WEST RELATIONS.

AS MUCH FOR NATIONAL REASONS, AS FOR REASONS LINKED WITH THE STATE OF DETENTE, THE MENACE OF A RUPTURE LACKS CREDIBILITY. ONE IS THUS FORCED TO GO ON.

(B) SOME EUROPEANS - IRRESPECTIVE OF WHAT THE AMERICANS ARE PLANNING TO DO - ARE PROBABLY MORE PRESSED FOR TIME THAN THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE ONE YEAR AGO. BESIDES, THIS TIME FACTOR PLAYS A DIFFERENT ROLE FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER, BUT ONE SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE IT.

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(C) TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE ABOVE ANALYSIS OF EXISTING POSITIONS, THE COMMON CEILING REMAINS THE OBJECTIVE TO BE REACHED. IT IS THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENT OF NEGOTIATION SINCE IT CONCERNS, IN FACT, THE CONCRETE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF ASYMMETRY WHICH DETERMINES THE WHOLE WESTERN APPROACH REGARDING TROOP REDUCTIONS.

CERTAINLY, THE METHODS TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL ARE NEGOTIABLE.

NEVERTHELESS, THE PRINCIPLE MUST BE AFFIRMED WITH ALL THE REQUISITE VIGOR.

(D) THE QUESTION OF THE PHASES HAS ALMOST TOTALLY POLARIZED THE DEBATE TO THE PREJUDICE OF THE COMMON CEILING. IT WOULD, HENCEFORTH, BE PREFERABLE TO REVERSE THE ORDER OF PRIORITIES AND TO CENTER THE DISCUSSION ON THE FINAL RESULT. THERE IS A DANGER TO GO ON CONFINING ONESELF TO THE PHASES. THIS DISCUSSION ALLOWS THE WARSAW PACT TO AVOID THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION WHICH BEARS ON THE TERMINUS AD QUEM.

THIS IS ALL THE MORE TRUE SINCE THE PACT OF WARSAW SEEMS TO ACCOMMODATE ITSELF TO A LIMITED DISCUSSION AIMING AT POSTPONING THE SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTIONS AND THE FUNDAMENTAL DISCUSSIONS WHICH TOUCH THE ESSENCE ITSELF OF THE WESTERN APPROACH. TO PERSIST IN THAT WILL BRING WITH IT THE RISK OF DRAWING US INTO A FIRST PHASE WHICH WILL BE CLOSER TO THE "FIRST STEP" OF THE SOVIETS THAN TO A PROGRESS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE COMMON CEILING. THE LAST PROPOSALS OF THE WARSAW PACT SEEM TO CONFIRM THIS

POINT.

(5) IN CONSEQUENCE, AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE
INTEREST THAT HAS BEEN REAFFIRMED BY THE SOVIETS FOR

NEGOTIATIONS, THE DISCUSSION MUST BE CENTERED, BY PRIORITY,
ON THE COMMON CEILING, THE CONCEPT OF PHASES AND THE
QUESTION OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE FORCES WHICH MUST TAKE
PART IN THE REDUCTIONS REMAIN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE
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NEGOTIATION.

IT IS THUS NOT A QUESTION OF ABANDONING THEM BUT TO
PURSUE THE NEGOTIATION OF THIS PROGRESS ACCORDING TO
THE PROGRESS WHICH HAS BEEN REGISTERED BY PRIORITY ON
THE PRINCIPLES OF ASYMMETRY AND COMMON CEILING. IT IS
CERTAIN THAT A NEGOTIATION ON THIS LAST THEME MUST TAKE
PLACE ON THE BASIS OF A MANDATE FIXED BY THE ALLIANCE.
NEVERTHELESS, THESE NEGOTIATIONS - IF THEY REALLY START -
MUST EMERGE RATHER QUICKLY ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE
PARTICIPATING FORCES TO THE REDUCTIONS AND ON THE
STRUCTURE OF THE CEILING.

IT IS, THEREFORE, PROBABLE THAT THE QUESTION OF THE
PHASES WILL APPEAR THEN IN DIFFERENT TERMS AND IN A
DIFFERENT VIEW. THIS DISCUSSION WOULD THUS BE FRUITFUL
ONLY ON THE BASIS OF SUFFICIENT PRECISIONS REGARDING
THE OBJECTIVES WHICH CAN BE ACHIEVED.

MEANWHILE, THE ATTACHMENT OF THE WEST TO THE PRINCIPLE
OF THE PHASES CAN BE RECALLED TO MIND EVERY TIME IT IS
NECESSARY, NAMELY IN THE FRAMEWORK OF PLANARY MEETINGS.

(6) ONE HAS TO PREPARE THE ALLIANCE FOR NEGOTIATIONS
WHICH MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE ORDER OF PRIORITIES
WHICH HAS JUST BEEN ESTABLISHED. IT WOULD THUS BE
DESIRABLE TO DO SO:

(A) THAT OUR NEGOTIATORS IN VIENNA START THOROUGH DIS-
CUSSIONS WITH THE EAST ON THE COMMON CEILING. THIS
EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WILL HAVE TO RELY ON RECIPROCAL
COMMUNICATION OF FIGURES OF THE LEVEL OF FORCES, ETC.

(B) AT THE SAME TIME, AN ANALYSIS SHOULD BE DONE IN THE
ALLIANCE ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE COMMON CEILING TAKING
INTO ACCOUNT THE REQUESTS ONE MUST EXPECT FROM THE
WARSAW PACT REGARDING THE INCLUSION OF THE AIR FORCES
AND THE WEAPONS, PARTICULARLY THE NUCLEAR COMPONENT.
THIS ANALYSIS HAS, IN FACT, JUST BEEN STARTED CONCERNING
THE PERSONNEL OF THE AIR FORCE. END TEXT. KISSINGER

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